



NEWS RELEASE

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CROFTERS PREPARE FOR REFORM DEBATE

The Scottish Crofting Federation have convened their reform working group to scrutinise the crofting reform bill launched today and are preparing for the debate to come, on whether the bill is fit for purpose.

Marina Dennis, chair of the SCF crofting reform working group, said "at first glance our reaction is that the government have listened to our response to the draft bill and have dropped some of the more widely rejected proposals such as the housing burden and use of croft tenancies to secure loans for housing. There are some potentially useful aspects to the bill if implemented sensitively and there are of course some proposals we will be seeking amendment to, such as costs to crofters".

Ms Dennis continued "there has been criticism of the Crofters Commission over the last decade and the fact that the bill recognises this with a re-organisation of the commission, making it more democratic and accountable has to be a good thing."

"The need for a comprehensive crofting register is long overdue so the proposal to compile this register is likely to be broadly approved by our membership. However, we continue to urge caution on the process as if this is not done in a participatory manner it could be very divisive and lead to stagnation in crofting community development – completely counter-productive. We want to see crofting communities taking ownership of mapping their assets and it is the government's duty to help facilitate this."

"There is potential for this bill to help crofting re-vitalise, but we are adamant that this will not be achieved by 'cracking the whip' or by piling fees on to crofters at a time when crofters are struggling to survive. We want to see the government recognise the value of crofting and to reward the contribution crofting makes to non-market public goods such as protecting our environment, enhancing our landscape and retaining population. Our working group will give the bill thorough consideration and will prepare our contributions to the debate".

END

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Notes to editors

Pictures can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>